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Repton's Red Book

of

Spainslands

Observations by H. Repton for the Improvement of Shrublands 1789. (2)

divided into the following Heads.

1st. General Remarks on the Situation

2. Views from the House

3. Approach from the North.

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5. Walks.

6. Scite of the Old Hall Farm &c.

7. The Park.

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9. Three Clauses to be introduced in Leases.

General Remarks

First. This Park is beautifully varied by Inequality of Ground, & richly ornamented with Timber of prodigious Size, but the House which stands upon the highest Ground in the Park, is not placed in the best Situation that might have been chosen, from the unfortunate Mistake so often made in not distinguishing betwixt an extensive Prospect & a pleasing Landscape. The former can only be had from an Eminence, the latter must seldom be expected there because in proportion as we are lifted above the Tops of Trees we lose the Advantage of a foreground which is essential to a good Composition. This Elegant Mansion is put so near the Edge of a Steep Declivity that it is necessary to depart from the Original Design of the Builder & approach the House at the East Front which seems not to have been intended, by a road having been made at a great Expence up the Bank to approach the West Front. If a further Alteration in the

the Architecture may be allowed I should recommend the windows in the Dining Room to the west be all put by, & One large window opened to the South - This would not only be a more pleasing Aspect for a Dining Room But the view instead of a painful Stare would become a rich & pleasing Landscape and if the same thing were also done towards the North +in Mrs Middletons Dressing Room to look up the majestic Row of Spanish Chesnuts - I am sure the windows to the west in that Room would become useless at least during the Summer.

+now the Drawing Room.

2.

Views from the House

But if my Advice appears too bold in recommending so material an Alteration as that of changing the Aspects of these two Rooms, It then becomes necessary to point out what may be done to improve the prospect to the west. The Sloping Bank to the west must be planted with Shrubs towards the Summit, & high growing Trees at the base, this will give Safety to the Esplanade before the Door, and make the House appear to stand firmly and proudly embosomed in wood instead of tottering on the Brink of a Precipice; such a plantation will answer many other purposes 1st It will become a delightful Dress Garden of which I shall speak more hereafter - 2nd It will totally exclude the Farm House & Inclosures between the Mansion & the Road, which may

remain in their present State appearing
one Mass of wood to the Turnpike – and
3dly It will become the best foreground
possible in such a situation. The second
Distances of this Landscape may be improved
by removing cross Hedges; by planting the
†Furzes Hill – Top of the Wallnut Tree† Hill D. & thickening
the whole of the Tower Hill Plantation.
The Tower also may be made more
light & pleasing by the mere addition
of pinacles – as shewn in the Sketch, which
is rather intended to give a general
Idea of the advantage to be derived
from adding a foreground & clothing
the hills than to be a Guide in the
disposition of the Plantations on the plain
for tho' one Semi-circular Clump as at
E in the map may be happily introduced
yet two Clumps never enter well
into a good composition & I have
shewn them in Drawing rather as an Error to be
avoided than copied. But the Fact is
that during the two Days I passed at Shrub-
-lands the continual Rain & the attention
given to other objects prevented my
becoming further acquainted with this
flat part of the Grounds, than to know
the necessity of ~~grouping~~ removing
Hedges, & grouping some Trees to give a
parkish appearance to the Scene.

Approach from the North.

For the Reasons assigned above I can
only speak to this approach from the
bottom of the old Park supposing it to
come from the Turnpike by the Lane
at F. Hereafter it may take its
course more extensively thro' the
Grounds but still it must come
to the same Place at G. from hence
leaving the old Road to the left which

may be used as a way to the Stables and farm, it will ascend the Hill with difficulty when part of the ridge is thrown down & it will take its course by the side of the dressed Ground to the right. It is impoſsible to conceive any thing more magnificent than the view of Chesnut Trees under whose branches the View of the valley is seen during the remainder of this Approach, till it is shut out by the Shrubbery near the House. — As few heavy Carts or Waggons will paſs betwixt the house & Stables I have marked a Line of Communication betwixt the two gravel Roads with graſs because the putting in a road of Gravel will always offend the Eye where the Lines require Angles so very acute. Therefore for this short distance Coaches may run over the Graſs in various Tracks. —

Approach from Ipswich.

This Road as marked with orange in the map is supposed to branch from the turnpike a little beyond the Cottage which does not belong to this Estate. It enters the Grounds betwixt two Plantations & a Lodge at this Entrance would be both useful to prevent the Park being made a thoroughfare, as well as ornamental to the Road. These Plantations are both neceſsary — that on the left to conceal the House from the Approach and that on the right to shut out the shabby Cottage & to give that air of Importance and extent of Property which remote Plantations always confer. — The road proceeds in as easy a Line as the Inequality of the Ground will permit tho' it appears unneceſsarily curving on the Map, It rises

Page 5— Rises gently, with a View to the left in which the Plantation A is necessary to hide the Farm &c. — then passing a small Clump at B the View opens over an extensive Lawn to the right terminated by a hanging Wood — I should wish a plain Cottage to stand at the Spot C. This will be usefull as a Gamekeeper Lodge & a Gate here will be necessary for a Drive or Ride into the Woods. This Lodge will be a delightful Object in the Approach with the Smoke curling in fleecy folds against the dark Green of Trees which terminates the Landscape.

Garden & Walks

The Kitchen Garden of the old House may be enlarged by running a pale fence just below the Brow of the Whole Knowle to the South & West — This Fence will not only allow of a great Increase of Kitchen Garden but it should contain a Shrubbery which will hide the Garden Walls &c. & be a charming Addition to the pleasure Walks because the Seats in this Knowle will command the most pleasing Views as it may be made without all Comparison the most delightful Situation in the Park when some Trees are judiciously taken away in the bottom, & the Hills redeem the cloathing of which in some Places they have been incau-tiously robbed particularly at the part marked D — The Whole of the part near the House distinguished by Green I wish to have Shrubbery & mowing Lawn with gravel Walks conducted along the Slope of the Bank in nearly the direction marked with Yellow Lines — Sometimes winding

thro' the wooded bottom & sometimes
rising to take advantage of such parts
of the distant Country, as may serve
to vary the prospects in the most
engaging manner; but the most
interesting part of this Sloped Ground
will lead the Walk towards the Kitchen
Garden along the Natural Terrace,
under the Spreading Branches of the
venerable Chesnut Trees.

Scite of the old Hall.

This it is proposed to convert into
a farm house still using the Coach
House Stables &c but it will be necessary
to hide the Stable yard from the Path
by a plantation continued from the
Shrubbery as at K. and in taking
down the old Mansion I could
wish for the Reverence due to Anti-
-quity that some part might be
preserved particularly the Chapel &
the Chequered Porch & if it were possible
without interfering too much with the
Convenience of the Farm Yard, I
should be glad to conduct a drive or
walk from the Shrubbery round the
Kitchen Garden to Seats in or near
these Remnants of ancient Piety &
Hospitality - Having taken a Sketch
of this Motley Pile as it stood July 23
1789 I shall annex it as Matter of Curiosity.

The Park.

It being Mr Middleton's Intention
to dispose of the Deer which tho' desirable
in some respects are the greatest
Enemies to all Improvements, Some
of the Park not seen from the house
may be converted to the Purposes of
Agriculture where the Land is good
But I apprehend that much of the
Land now ploughed would be more

profitably & I am certain more beautifully employed in being laid down as Sheep walk - The Method of folding as practised in the West of England is the most effective to produce pleasing Verdure on a poor Soil - for this purpose I should recommend that the whole of the grounds thro' which the Approaches pass, be thrown into open Lawn removing the Hedges and leaving occasional single Trees or Groups, & fotesting the plains with Thorns and Maples and this Sheep Walk may be either all connected together or divided into North & South by a Sunk Fence from the Kitchen Garden to the home Dress'd Garden on the brow of the Hill which I should prefer to the present Fence at I.o. because that cuts across the valley and in some points destroys the Effect of the several Vallies branching up towards the Hill. —

Plantations

As several Plantations have been recommended in the course of the foregoing pages It is necessary to say something concerning the best manner of fencing The best sort possible is post & rails made neatly & painted with dark green but it is very expensive. Yet I can by no means recommend a Hedge & Ditch as a fence to a Plantation because for the first four or five Years when Young plants require most protection It is no protection & after the Trees have grown out of Danger It becomes an ugly Line of Seperation betwixt the Wood and the Lawn which it is intended to embellish - Therefore

always advise a cheap light fence of rough post & Rails or ash poles that thro' light posts set at not more than six feet asunder, which may last five or six Years by which time a Quick Hedge will be ready to succeed & do its Office - a Row of Thorns therefore must be planted at the same time with the Trees about 4 Yards within the Rail leaving room for two or three more Trees betwixt the two fences & thus when the outward Fence is removed Many of the Trees which may be called the "forlorn hope" will defy all Injury & yet hide the disgusting Uniformity of the Quick Hedge which will for ever serve as a Protection to the inner Trees.

Here ends Mr Repton's MS.—